

Town Halls, GAK Archives, and Dioceses

Eventually your correspondence will include letters to local civil record offices (Town Halls), the GAK Historical Archives, and the Orthodox Dioceses. These letters should be more business-like, but they must not be written in such a manner as to alienate. Greek office workers are more apt to answer a letter from a fellow Greek than to a "pompous, demanding American." Be considerate of their work load and make your letter as simple to understand as possible. Make it immediately clear what it is you want, without supplying a lot of unnecessary information.



Newlyweds in Lamia, Fthiotidos, 1910

The letter should be written in Greek. If you cannot write in Greek you may want to use the form letters that are on pp. 102-117.

When addressing an envelope to a Town Hall, the GAK Archive, or a diocese, no street address is necessary. However the name of town, district, and county must be written in their Greek spelling even if you use letters of

the English alphabet. (See transliteration, pp.129-130.)

◆ Town Halls:

Records of births: Γεννήσεις [genniseis], of deaths: Θάνατοι [thanatoi], and of family structure: Δημοτολόγιο [dimotologio] are kept in local Town Halls (Mayor's offices). You can write to these offices and request information.

It is sometimes not an easy matter to get information from these records. The clerks who work in the Town Halls are usually overloaded with daily duties. A request for information from old records about dead people may seem quite unnecessary and most clerks will not want to bother with it. They may reply that the records were "burned in the war" or lost in some other way. This is an easy excuse to avoid searching in dusty storage places. You will have greater success if you explain that the information is for your family history or that you are trying to locate distant relatives. This will be more acceptable to the clerk. It is best to address your request to the highest authority in the office (mayor) and ask that the clerk be assigned to send the needed information. In this way the clerk who does the actual searching in the records storage room will be carrying out orders from his supervisor.

◆ GAK Archives:

Only old records are kept at these archives. Obtaining information from the GAK Archives is easier. Most of their staff are historians who understand better your love for your family history. (More on GAK see p. 18.)

◆ Dioceses:

As mentioned before, marriage records as well as some other records of genealogical value

are kept by the diocese [Ιερά Μητρόπολις, Iera Mitropolis]. You should address your request for information to the head of the diocese called Μητροπολίτης, Mitropolititis [in English he is called *Metropolitan*]. The head of an archdiocese is called Αρχιεπίσκοπος, Arhiepiskopos [*Archbishop* in English].

The proper way to address members of the clergy is:

The *Mitropolititis* meaning Metropolitan, (head of *Iera Mitropolis* - Diocese):

“Sevasmiotate Mitropolititi” [Σεβασμιώτατε Μητροπολίτη]

The *Arhiepiskopos* (head of an *Iera Arhiepiskopi* - Archdiocese):

“Makariotate Arhiepiskope” [Μακαριώτατε Αρχιεπίσκοπε]

The Patriarch (head of the *Ecumenical Patriarchate* [Orthodox churches]):

“Αυτού Θειοτάτην Παναγιότητα, Αρχιεπίσκοπον Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Νέας Ρώμης, και Οικουμενικόν Πατριάρχην”
[Autou Theiotatin Panagiotitan, Arhiepiskopon Konstantinoupoleos, Neas Romis kai Oikoumenikon Patriarhin].



Antonios A. Kitsikopoulos and Niki N. Razi
Athens, 1930

As explained on chapter 7 there are ninety two dioceses in Greece, 80 under the direction of

the Archbishop of Greece whose office is in Athens, 8 dioceses in Crete under a Cretan archbishop, and 4 dioceses in the Dodecanese, under the direction of a Dodecanese archbishop. Any requests for information should be addressed directly to the head of the local diocese.

To determine which diocese [Μητρόπολις, Mitropolis] has jurisdiction over a particular village, you need to use the *Greek Gazetteer*, vol. 2, Part III, by Lica H. Catsakis (Bywater), year 2000, written in English, or the *Λεξικόν των Δήμων, Κοινοτήτων και Οικισμών της Ελλάδος* [Lexikon ton Dimon, Koinotiton kai Oikismon tis Ellados], year 1974, written in Greek, as explained on chapter 6, pp.72-73. However, keep in mind that in the mean time some new dioceses may have been established and some names of old dioceses may have been changed.

Addresses

The address on the envelope to Greece should be written with capital letters of the English alphabet. Postmen in Greece know the English alphabet well enough to deliver mail. A letter clearly addressed using the English alphabet is more likely to be correctly delivered than one with poorly written Greek.

♦ **Local City Mayor:**

Axiotimo Kyrio Dimarho (municipality name),
(City), (Nomos), GREECE.

If there is another town with the same name in the same nomos you need to add the name of the district between the names of the town and county. For information on how to find out in what *nomos* a given town is, see chapter 6, pp. 71-73.

♦ **Diocese:**

For a complete list of addresses of dioceses see chapter 7, p.80.

Cost

It is advisable to send a small amount for expenses (postage, certificate fee, and such). In Greece, certificates require a stamp which costs the records office money.

It is good to enclose a **\$20.00** bill in the envelope, placed in a folded piece of newspaper.

The form letters include a sentence referring to the money enclosed. Be sure to correctly indicate in the blank space the amount you enclose.

What to Expect

The information will be sent to you in the form of a certificate (birth, marriage or death). These are pre-printed forms on which the information is filled into the provided blank spaces. This means that the clerk filling out the form (certificate) will only record the information for which there are blanks provided on this sheet of paper. Thus, there may be more information included in the record book than you actually receive. For this reason, it is wise to ask that the complete information included in the record book will be sent to you.



A restaurant in Athens, 11 April 1922

You can photocopy the questionnaire that is on the next page and send it to a relative. You can also photocopy any of the form letters that are in the following pages, and mail it to a civil or church authority. It is **most important** that you read the instructions given below.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FAMILY QUESTIONNAIRE

On the next page is a Family Questionnaire. This Questionnaire has been very successful to some who needed information from relatives in Greece. It is suggested that you make an enlarged photocopy of this Questionnaire (just one page) on legal size paper, and include it in your letter to your **relatives** in Greece. In order to help them understand how to use it, it is best for you to write one or two examples. Choose a living or dead person that both you and your relative in Greece know, and for whom you both have information. Write on the first line of the Family Questionnaire the name of that person and all the information you have about this person as an example. You may want to use on the second line a second person for whom you have less information and leave blank the boxes for which you do not have the information. Then on the following lines write the names of persons that you want to have information filling in the information that you already have. It is best to write in Greek, but if you cannot do it, write the names and information in English but make sure you write clearly and use CAPITAL LETTERS. It is very difficult for people who's mother language is not English to understand handwriting. At the bottom line of the Questionnaire a brief note in Greek is included. Below is the translation of that note:

“on this paper I have written some names as an example. Please fill in the blanks with the information you have. Write them in Greek, lower case for the given names and capital letter for the surnames. Thank you so much!”

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM LETTERS

- Fill the blanks in English CAPITAL letters. On the year line use a span of years (for example 1872-1880) even if you have a date. If you are not sure about the birth place, put a question mark after the name of the place in which you think your ancestor was born.
- Write your address in English CAPITAL letters
- Mark in the blank space of the last paragraph the amount you send (suggested \$20.00 or even better € 20 Euros)
- Include the \$20.00 (or the € 20 Euros) bill placed in a folded piece of newspaper
- Make a photocopy of your letter
- Write the address and return address in English CAPITAL letters
- Send the letter registered or certified

If you do not receive an answer in 6 months send a follow-up letter (see pp. 116-117) including a photocopy of your first letter. Always keep a copy of what you send.

LETTER TO A DIOCESE

Asking for a Marriage Record

(key word “γάμου” last word of 4th line of text)

Very important to read the *INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORM LETTERS* on p.100

To the Reverend Metropolitan
(Address of Diocese, see pp.80-92)

_____(Date)

Reverend Metropolitan:

I am a Greek living abroad. I am trying to gather information about my ancestors in order to complete my family history, so that my children may maintain our national heritage. I would appreciate it if you would ask the clerk of your Diocese to send to me a marriage certificate

of _____ (Husband's Name)

and _____ (Wife's Name) _____.

The marriage was performed at _____ (Place)
in about (year – include 7-10 years) _____

I would be very much obliged if you give instructions that all the information contained in the record will be sent to me, especially the names of the parents of the groom and the bride, their birthplaces; day, month, and year of birth for each; day, month and year of marriage; and any other detail mentioned in your records.

Enclosed are _____ dollars for postage and other expenses. Please let me know if I need to send more.

I warmly thank you.

Respectfully,
(Your signature in English)

(Your name and address in English capital letters)

This letter is provided as a Greek form letter on the following page.

Σεβασμιώτατο Μητροπολίτη

Σεβασμιώτατε,

Είμαι Έλληνας του εξωτερικού. Προσπαθώ να συλλέξω πληροφορίες για τους προγόνους μου για να συμπληρώσω την ιστορία της οικογένειάς μου, και έτσι να διατηρήσουν τα παιδιά μου την εθνική μας παράδοση. Σας παρακαλώ να δώσετε εντολή στον γραμματέα της Μητροπόλεώς σας να μου στείλει ένα πιστοποιητικό γάμου

τού _____

και της _____.

Ο γάμος τελέστηκε στο _____

περίπου το _____.

Θα σας είμαι υπόχρεος αν δώσετε εντολή να μου σταλούν όλες οι πληροφορίες που περιέχονται στα βιβλία σας, ειδικά τα ονόματα των γονέων του γαμπρού και της νύφης, τον τόπο γεννήσεώς των, την ημέρα, μήνα, χρόνο γενήσεως του καθενός, την ημέρα, μήνα, χρόνο του γάμου, και οποιαδήποτε άλλη λεπτομέρεια περιέχεται στα αρχεία σας.

Εσωκλείω _____ δολάρια για ταχυδρομικά και άλλα έξοδα. Παρακαλώ γράψτε μου αν χρειάζεται να στείλω περισσότερα.

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμότατα

Υποβάλλω τα σέβη μου

FOLLOW UP LETTER

(date)

(address the way you wrote it on the first letter)

(Write how you addressed the person on your first letter)

On (date of 1st letter) I mailed to you a letter, please see enclosed copy. Please instruct the proper clerk to send to me the information I requested.

Thank you warmly

(your signature)

(Your name and address in English capital letters)

Στις _____ σας έστειλα ένα γράμμα (βλ. εσώκλειστο αντίγραφο). Παρακαλώ δώστε εντολή στον αρμόδιο να μου στείλει τις πληροφορίες που ζητώ.
